Sandringham

Cardston Pioneers Recall Christmas 50 Years Ago When Settlement Started

Mothers Made Toys And Candies For Children

WEATHER FINE

THAT first Christmas at Cardston will not be forgotten by the steadily dwindling ranks of the pioneer party who came into Southern Alberta under the leadership of Charles Ora Card in the summer of 1887. This year, the golden jubilee of Cardston and the founding of the Mormon settlements in Alberta is being commemorated and in recalling the frontier days the pioneers tell of the fears of the kiddies that Santa Claus would not come that year.

Down in their old Utah home Santa Claus made visits to their homes every Christmas but what about now when they were far away in a new land, with Indians as their neighbors, and not a fence to mark human habitation between their tiny village, Fort Macleod and on to Calgary?

The fears of the children reached the ears of "Aunt" Zina, wife of President Card, the leader of the little band of colonists. That kindly lady soon had the mothers in session in her own home, now known as the pioneer home, still standing in the heart of the Temple City, and restored this year. Other meetings were held during which tender hands contrived playthings for the children.

The older girls were allowed to help by unravelling old wool stockings and helping make the candy, but they were as much surprised as the youngsters when they, too received gifts at the big Christmas party held at Mrs. Card's log home. These pioneer mothers, with their piece bags, needles, thread, and thimbles and the fathers, equally as resourceful, with saws and hammers and a few odd boards, made a surprisingly fine assortment of playthings.

"There were dolls and dollbeds, hobby horses, balls, aprons, pin cushions, work bags, cookies, and home-made candy. And was it good?" said Mrs. Jane Bates, recalling that memorable first Christmas. Mrs. Bates was a member of that first company, daughter of the late Bishop John A. Woolf and sister of "Johnny" Woolf, first member of the legislature for the Cardston district.

Christmas stockings made of mosquito netting also appeared to brighten the Yuletide on the frontier. The weather was fine and the Christmas party fairly delighted the youngsters. There was a big Christmas dinner, such as the pioneer women could prepare with their limited supplies of foodstuffs, while in the evening the colonists enjoyed a dance to the strains of a mouth organ.

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A MACLEOD old timer recalls his first Christmas at Fort Macleod in 1876. The post was established two years before. That Christmas, he says, they dined on buffalo, deer and beef, and there was plum pudding and pies of all kinds. When Inspector Macleod that evening inquired about the welfare of the men he did not hear any complaints. There were few eggs in the deserts that day, for eggs sold at $3.50 a dozen. One hundred men were stationed at Fort Macleod that Christmas, he states, a sharp contrast to the deserted old post today a mere shadow of its former glory.

Following the feast, there was a program, during which Piper Donald MacAuley was heard, to the delight of the Scots present. There were three white women at the fort that year: Mrs. Winder, Mrs. Shurtliffe and Mrs. Armstrong.

But looking backward still farther, one finds that historic Fort Benton on the Missouri river, the American end of the old Fort Nenton trail that ran south from Fort Macleod, celebrated its first Christmas in 1850. It was then called Fort Lewis, a post of the American Fur Company, rivals of the powerful Hudson's Bay Company of British America. A cannon salute to the day was fired. At the sound white trappers rushed into the fort enclosure, fearing a possible Indian attack. But it was not a warning and the commander of the Fort called to him the Indian chiefs, explained the significance of Christmas, and gave them gifts. We are told whisky was distributed to all, and two French half-breeds from Canada started to play their fiddles.

The Christmas feast consisted of dark bread, molasses and wild game. It was that day that the famous old post, jumping off place for traders going into the Alberta country from Montana territory, was re-named. It was thereafter called "Fort Benton" after Senator Thomas H. Benton of Montana, a noted official of the American Fur Company.

Cowpokes Went Berserk At Lethbridge Christmas Just Thirty Years Back

Riot Act Was Read After Wrecking Of Cafes

Xmas 1937

'FATAL' ERROR

SYMPATHY must not be accorded, too hastily, the pioneer who tells of grim privations—of Christmas without mincepies and cranberry sauce. There were some fairly successful Christmasses without tinsel trimmings. As for the privations—in some cases a little better planning was needed. Often the budget ran very heavily to alcohol, leaving insufficient funds for the evergreen, until too late to correct the error. Of course, for a real Dickensian Christmas a certain quantity of refreshment was excusable.

Dickens would have been well pleased with a Lethbridge Christmas of 15 years ago, in the days of prohibition. There was such a fine determination shown to ensure that potent spirits should be available. Probably one in every five down-town establishments had a back parlor where the public could obtain whatever they wanted. This was trus all the year round, but at Christmastide even the imaginary lid was definitely thrown away.

It would have cost Mr. Pickwick more than a trifle, however, to entertain his friends from Dingley Dell. There was no chance to "get drunk for a penny—blind drunk for tuppence." The standard charge was four bits a shot.

Christmas rejoicing is properly a matter for the home, and it is not very often that excitement marks the street scene on Christmas Day. Exactly 30 years ago Lethbridge staged an exception to this rule.

Read the Riot Act

Upon the evening of Christmas Day, Dr. Galbraith, the mayor of the city, stood forth upon an eminence and addressed a message counselling peace and good-will. His speech was supported by the presence of both city and R.N.W.M.P. forces, all of whom were considerably out of breath, having had much violent exercise after their customarily heavy Christmas dinner. The address was not framed upon the New Testament's words, but was taken directly from the Riot Act. What had caused such a crisis upon a day usually devoted, in Lethbridge, to lacrosse, baseball and the national indoor pastime of poker?

On Christmas Day, 1907, two cowboys had visited the city to complete their shopping. In the course of their tour, an argument had developed with one Wun Lung, of the Coaldale Restaurant, which stood where Woolworth's stands now. At a high point in the discussion, Wun Lung had closed the broadcast by denting the skull of one cowboy with the blunt edge of a clever. The cowboys, one supporting the other, retreated with a few expressions of indignation at such display of unseasonable spirit.

A few hours later a third cowboy from the same district arrived in town. He was refreshing himself at the Dallas hotel when someone inquired as to the condition of the wounded man, who had gone home to recuperate. In a grimly laconic fashion the answer came: "Dead!"

Wrecked Restaurant

Rapidly the news spread, and within half an hour an angry mob had collected. After a brief discussion the crowd milled across the street and proceeded to wreck the entire premises of Wun Lung. Then it moved out and looked around for more Orientals to conquer. There were several other restaurants, but in the course of attacking these the rioters were hampered by the interference of Chief Parry of the city, assisted by the Mounties. The latter had brought along a canvas-covered wagon. Rioters were being arrested quite freely, but it was noticed that the wagon required a lot of filling. Then it was seen that many of those loaded aboard at the back of the vehicle were escaping at the front, where the driver was coping with a restive team.

Finally, as the crowd was organizing for a grand march upon Chinatown, His Worship the Mayor arrived, read the Riot Act, and brought further activity to a close.

Following these events a bereaved friend of the dead man rode out to the ranch to see about funeral plans. He found the deceased playing in the orchestra at the Christmas rural dance. The cowboy had a slight headache but was otherwise quite well. Nor was his expectation of life cut down, for he is still alive on the southern plains, his one regret being that he should have missed so much of the excitement of a memorable Christmas.

Scandinavian Whoopee

Time marches on—and finds itself back in the prohibition days. The scene is a police detachment of a thriving southern town. It is Christmas Day, but the A.P.P. corporal is not having much of a rest. He has just released a prisoner on bail, and is thinking of eating a belated Christmas dinner, when he is called out again. This time he has to deal with two Scandinavians who are becoming noisy in a restaurant. He issues an official warning and it seems to take effect, so he returns to his house and rejoins his family at the festive board. An hour later and he has to go forth once more. The Scandinavians, proud of the Nordic contribution of the wassail bowl to Christmas customs, have imbibed some more and are threatening to take the local dance hall to pieces. The corporal arrests them and lodges them in the cage-like cell of the detachment.

For some time the two prisoners contribute songs but suddenly their disturbance ceases and is succeeded by half-an-hour of quiet. Then it breaks forth again, with great vehemence. The corporal visits the cell room and is greeted cheerily. His guests subside and he leaves them. Once against, there is a sudden outbreak of rejoicing.

"What can be the matter?" he asks his wife. "They act very good, somehow."

"Good heavens, Bob! Can they have got at the liquor?" The mystery was solved. The prisoners had discovered that a sack of bottles, seized from a bootlegger that very day, had been deposited within fishing distance of the bar of their cage. What great skill, they had contrived to get a bottle neck within the bars and the rest was easy.

Exhibit "A" was minus one crock's contents in a few minutes, and the guests had returned thanks for such treatment in songs of a seasonable nature. It was a Christmas carol such as Dickens would have enjoyed prescribing for.

—T. E. Rodie.

London slums and ten million other little girls wherever Santa Claus is known.

Christmas Chime Service Tonight

The chimes of Central United church will usher in the service of Christmas chimes, sponsored by the Calgary United Church Young People's Union, this evening at 10:30.

The service will commence in the church at 10:45 p.m., following a prelude of carols played on the chimes.

The program will include Christmas numbers played on the organ by Victor Graham, a vocal solo, music by the double quartet, and the singing of familiar Christmas carols. The service will be further enhanced by violin selections.

A committee of young people, under the convenership of Margaret Lower, is responsible for this program. The service will conclude at 11:30 p.m. sharp.

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Canadian Pacific Steamships

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